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Mr. Abílio Araújo
Member of the Fretilin Central Committee
and Minister of State for Economic and Social Affairs
in the Democratic Republic of East Timor
Calcada de Carriche Lote 13 5° Dto
1700 Lisbon, Portugal

Dear Mr. Araujo,

I was happy to hear that Mrs. Carmel Budiardjo had the opportunity, during the Lisbon Tribunal hearings on East Timor last month, to talk with you and put before you the thoughts we in London have been having about East Timor over the last year. Carmel tells me there will be letters from you coming both to our Centre here and to the Catholic Institute for International Relations in London, and I look forward to that.

It seemed most important to us, as we did our thinking about East Timor, that you in Fretilin should be kept well informed and that we have your thoughts and counsel before undertaking any initiatives aimed at self-determination for East Timor. It is not that we look for prior endorsement, though we would be quite determined not to act in any way against the interests of Fretilin. But whereas we, who are not Fretilin, can sometimes undertake things that Fretilin itself could not, we would be anxious not to expend our energies in directions that would turn out to be unwelcome to Fretilin, to make commitments on policy that might be premature, or compromise positions on which Fretilin might need to reserve.

Our experience has been of lobbying for self-determination in East Timor with the British Government and public, particularly over the period of a visit to London by East Timorese refugees, Fr. Francisco Fernandes and Mr. Ao Seu Ki, in the summer of 1980, but also over a period before and since. Several of us from different institutions have worked closely together over this matter: we of this Centre of Concern for Human Dignity (besides myself, that means Jesuit Fathers Liam McKenna and Brian McClorry); the Catholic Institute for International Relations (CIIR), a much larger institution under the direction of Miss Mildred Neville, in which Mr. Robert Archer is now the responsible person for this matter of East Timor; Mrs. Carmel Budiardjo and her associates of Tapol; and Mr. John Taylor of the British Campaign for an Independent East Timor (BCIET). We have been in regular contact with Arnold Cohen and Mrs. Veronica Parke in the USA, as well as with Fr. Mark Raper of the Asian Bureau Australia and Fr. Pat Walsh of ACFOA in Australia. Carmel and I also made a visit to Amsterdam earlier this year to compare our thinking with that of Mr. Liem Siou Liong and his associates, and while there went over to the Hague to talk with Fr. Roetenberg.

Lobbying in Britain, we have had to reckon that we were dealing with a Government and politicians who do not really believe there is any near prospect of self-determination for East Timor. Hence, whatever they may say to us now, they will surely rethink their positions if any such real possibility should loom on their horizons. However given the current situation in the terms they see it,

are prepared to speak in a friendly way of East Timor's rights and aspirations for freedom. They are evasive on specific points that embarrass them, such as their diplomatic activity in 1975, their sale of Hawk planes to Indonesia, the lack of energy in their investigation of the murders of British journalists in 1975, etc. But formal statements in the Parliament, from Foreign Secretary Lord Carrington and other official Government spokesmen, have recognised the right of East Timor to self-determination, acknowledged that this right has not in any way been exercised under the Indonesian regime. In private conversation with us and with the East Timorese refugees here last year, the Foreign Office spokesman has also acknoledged that Portugal has residual responsibility to provide for such an act of self-determination. He insisted on Britain's maintaining friendly relations with both Portugal and Indonesia, but stated the British Government's readiness to support Portugal in her initiatives to carry out her residual responsibility with regard to East Timor's self-determination.

We have found many other forces friendly to East Timor in British politics and public life. In the Labour Party, Mr. Peter Shore, up to recently the shadow spokesman on Foreign Affairs, and the basic policy of the NEC (National Executive Council of the Labour Party) have been especially helpful. Of the Liberal Party, Lord Avebury, head of the Inter-Party Parliamentary Group on Human Rights, has worked hard for the East Timorese cause on many occasions, as have many other members of his group. So has Lord Chitnis. This, of course, is what individuals of the Opposition parties do while not in power, and may be different from what their parties would do if in power, but it is encouraging. Other public figures willing to act for East Timor's rights are the Archbishop of Canterbury, whose voice, if he raises it in the House of Lords, is an important one, and Mr. Alf Lomas, Labour Party Member of the European Parliament.

That Britain has consistently been abstaining on the annual resolution introduced by Portugal at the UN on East Timor is explained, by the Foreign Office, with a variety of fairly transparent excuses. One of them that we had last year was that the resolution called for acknowledgment only of the rights of Fretilin rather than for all the East Timorese parties (!). These excuses are not to be taken too seriously: if these objections were removed, the Foreign Office would find others to serve in their place, as it is plainly following, in this matter, a US lead, not to the extent of voting against the resolution but by abstaining, as do the rest of the European powers. I would take it that the UN vote is not a power lever in itself, but merely a useful index, and that there are other, more accurate, ways to calculate the index.

In summation, the British are disposed to help. They are inclined still to expect that their help will be at the 'humanitarian' level, alleviating the suffering that has been caused by the Indonesian invasion, but they are not at all unwilling to go to the political level (reluctant though they are to admit their own complicity). It will have to be expected that they will do a new assessment once there is real prospect of political progress towards the real freedom of East Timor.

But they will act politically only in the context of assisting Portugal to carry out her residual responsibility as the former colonial power.

This is important for three reasons:

1. the close long-term alliance and friendship of Portugal and Britain, which both countries seem to value highly.

2. the Zimbabwe parallel. The British, especially this current

Government, are especially proud of their success in fulfilling, after fourteen years in which they really didn't believe in their own capacity to do it, their residual responsibility as former colonial power to provide for the free self-determination of Zimbabwe. The parallel is not exact, of course, but much can be learned both from where the parallel applies and from where it most clearly does not. But the British Government is strongly motivated to assist Portugal in doing something analogous for East Timor.

3. the British position, which is a strong one, to give a lead to the Common Market European countries in a matter on which all the European countries are very wary of the US position.

On the basis of this understanding of the British position, we ask ourselves a series of questions. First, what probability is there of Portugal doing something serious to implement that 'residual responsibility?' The answer is that Portugal is in a very weak position to do so, but in this is not unlike Britain during the many years of her impotence before the Rhodesian UDI. There is no military prospect at all of Portuguese intervention: not simply that, like Britain in 'Rhodesia,' she is unwilling to use military intervention, but that Portugal is entirely without the sort of military power that could make any dent in the Indonesian hold on East Timor. Portugal moreover has very little diplomatic leverage against Indonesia. And most important of all, Portugal has very little actual belief in her own capacity to do what is required by her 'residual responsibility.'

Whatever possibility Portugal will have to fulfill her responsibility, therefore, will have to be created around her by other countries.

Consequently, we ask ourselves three further questions:

1. How seriously would Britain act to provide Portugal with such an opportunity?

2. What attitude would the other Western European countries take to any such initiative? Would it be the same, or what would be the specific variants country by country? This is why we have been asking questions, first of the people supportive of East Timor in the Netherlands, as the Netherlands will be particularly important. The other European countries are likely to follow a combined British-Dutch lead in this matter, although France would be a law to herself and would have to be handled especially carefully.

3. What possibility is there of a concerted approach, both to supporting Portugal in such initiatives as she has already taken or would take in the future, and to encouraging or pressing Portugal to more serious moves in the future? I am not too inclined, myself, to attach great importance to the two diplomatic measures Portugal has taken in this last year, as those were relatively weak and had, from the start, small prospect of success. Portugal will only be in a position to take serious diplomatic measures when she has adequate support from other countries. One suggestion of John Taylor's is that the Europeans might even use the EEC entrance negotiations to press Portugal on this matter. That is doubtless worth exploring, but my own impression is that the Portuguese themselves are far readier to move in the matter of East Timor than the other European countries.

All these questions are to a large extent imponderables. There will have to be further unpredictable developments before this will work in the direction of independent self-determination for East Timor. Our effort is to have a strategy flexible enough so that we will be able to grasp those

opportunities when they come. We realise that some people, both in Fretilin and in the various support groups, feel and will feel that no path of negotiation, but only outright armed struggle should be tried. We realise also that Fretilin has a claim, to which we subscribe ourselves, to be the legitimate de jure Government of East Timor, and may not therefore initiate paths of negotiation which would compromise that de jure claim. It was most encouraging to us that the Lisbon Tribunal recognised that an act of self-determination had taken place in the Declaration of Independence that the then de facto Fretilin Government of the People's Republic of East Timor made in 1975. We give our moral endorsement to that recognition. The Tribunal's recognition of it does not definitively establish it yet in international law. And we, who are not Fretilin, can yet instigate processes of negotiation which Fretilin may not instigate itself.

In this area in particular, we are anxious to have Fretilin well informed of whatever we propose to do, have your counsel, be warned off what can have no useful purpose in your view, and provide you ample time and opportunity to plan your own strategies to respond to any such initiatives, which we realise may be quite different from ours.

What prospects are there in such European initiatives centered on the Portuguese residual responsibility? Clearly, the European countries cannot do this by themselves. A series of things would have to happen to give this a chance, and our strategy can only prepare the European countries and Portugal to take advantage of the situation if these other things do happen. Europe can put real pressure on the United States in the matter. The US itself thought (as did Britain and Australia) that the Indonesians could overwhelm East Timor quietly and quickly without anyone noticing. By now the whole affair has become an embarrassment, potentially a grave embarrassment to the US (and Britain and Australia). The degree of embarrassment will depend on the amount of public consciousness of the whole grim genocidal story that can be generated in those countries. At the point of time when that embarrassment becomes too acute to bear, the US can itself put great pressure on Indonesia. What is necessary, of course, is that Indonesia get out of East Timor entirely. But Indonesia can not hold East Timor without US (and under American pressure, European) support and armaments.

And Indonesia must in fact want to get out of East Timor. That seems a hopelessly remote prospect now. But Indonesia has had no joy of East Timor since the time of the invasion. The country is all liability to Indonesia. It is extremely difficult for us to get accurate information about what is happening inside East Timor, and particularly we have still no clear picture of what has happened since the new Indonesian military initiative, the 'exercises,' since March of this year. I could venture a speculation, namely that the Indonesians will have hurt and perhaps killed a great number of people in the cities, that they will have bombed and burned a great deal of the countryside, but that they will not have touched Fretilin's forces seriously at all. This is a kind of frustration Indonesia will tire of, especially if she is coming under pressure from other countries. And of course, Indonesia has had to keep all its crimes in East Timor secret from its own people. That secret will come out.

I take it as one of the main differences between East Timor's situation and that of Zimbabwe before the end of the war of liberation that the balance of military forces in East Timor is overwhelmingly against any outright victory for Fretilin in armed struggle. What Fretilin's forces have been able to accomplish, and appear able to continue, is to deny the Indonesians any victory or any unchallenged possession of the country. At the time when this becomes intolerable to Indonesia, especially if combined with strong international pressure, it will be up to the United States to provide Indonesia with some face-saving way of doing what it is necessary she should do, that is, clear out of East Timor

entirely. One other kind of initiative that we have been pursuing in London could conceivably be of help at that point too. We have talked several times to the representatives of the Muslim nations who maintain an important office in London, the Islamic Council of Europe. They have consistently been reluctant to take on the matter of East Timor at a political level, but respond strongly to the accounts of the extreme genocidal terror and the extent of the suffering in East Timor. It is possible that pressure from the Muslim countries, even from the Islamic Conference itself, could be brought to bear on Indonesia and used sharply at the right moment.

That is the gist of the thinking and questions we have raised about a strategy for our own activities on East Timor. You will have heard from Carmel Budiardjo of the prospect of getting a letter of support signed by a number of political figures in European countries, and you will be able to see how that might fit in as a detail of such an overall strategy as this, but would not be more than that. We are anxious for your thoughts, guidance and whatever caveats you may have on anything in this approach.

For myself, I will quite soon, in September, be leaving this Centre of Concern for Human Dignity and returning to work from my own country, the United States. You can rely on my two Jesuit colleagues in this Centre, Fr. Liam McKenna and Fr. Brian McClorry to make whatever facilities they have available to you to advance the cause of a free East Timor. I don't yet know in just what institutional context I will be working in the US, but I will surely be in a position to carry on the same sort of approach, and will quickly be in renewed contact with Arnold Kohen and Veronica Parke, as well as getting to know, for the first time, Michael Chamberlain and others who have helped in the cause of East Timor.

With all best wishes, I am,

sincerely yours,

Raymond G. Helmick, S.J.